

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Mar 4th 2013

No prophet is accepted in his own native place. The wisdom of one's own parents seems to pale beside the stranger. The lives of the saints from long ago and far away seem more real somehow than the devotion of the next door neighbor. A miracle should be something exotic and magical, but thinking like that keeps us from seeing the miracles that happen around us every day and from accepting the wisdom of our own friends and family.

When my nephew, Todd, was a baby, he was sitting on the back steps laughing and fell over backward onto the patio. My dad's best friend Gary was sitting on the patio, reached out his hand, and caught the baby mere inches before his head hit the concrete. We were amazed. It was a miracle, but the elements were all very common. Gary was over at the house more often than not. He was sitting on the patio drinking iced tea like a hundred other times. He certainly didn't seem the type who could cause a miracle. Todd was just walking then and was always all over the back yard. What simple elements – our good friend simply reaches out his hand, but the outcome was the miracle – the baby surely would have died. Gary saved his life. It was a miracle.

Naaman traveled far to the exotic foreign prophet, but when he got there the prophet's instructions seemed too easy. Naaman wanted ritual and foreign prayers and pageantry. He was told to wash in the river. He nearly disregarded the wisdom. It seemed too ordinary. But his servants had the right idea. If he had been told to do something extraordinary, he'd have done it in a minute, but he was balking at the ordinary. And the ordinary act of washing in the river had a miraculous outcome – he was cured of his leprosy. Like our friend Gary's ordinary act had a miraculous outcome.

People don't recognize the miracles in their own back yards. Naaman traveled far to visit this prophet and was healed. The folks in the prophet's own land missed out. They just saw him as the fellow down the street, nothing special. My family miracle happened in our own back yard, with our ordinary friends and family. The miracles that get the press are far off and fancy, but the world is full of miracles happening all around us every day. Every day we disregard wisdom from our friends and family, teachers and coworkers. The biggest miracles of all are sometimes the most common. What could be more miraculous than the birth of a baby? And with the current world population at 7,067,097,609, what could be more common? Daffodil leaves are up outside my office today (and with the weather this week, if they survive it will be a miracle). Spring flowers are the most common thing in the world, and the most miraculous.

Tami Whitney